



News Release

U.S. Representative Chris Chocola

Second District, Indiana

For Immediate Release
Wednesday, September 14, 2005
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Chocola Votes to Protect America's Children from Predators

Hails passage of plan to protect America's youth

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 3132, the “Children’s Safety Act of 2005,” a comprehensive plan to increase the safety and security of children in their homes, in their yards, and in their neighborhoods. U.S. Rep. Chris Chocola (R-Ind.) voted in favor of the legislation, which passed the House by a wide, bipartisan vote of 371-52.

“We’ve all heard the news reports and read the stories about horrific abductions across the country, and it is time for the federal government to address the issue with common sense reforms,” said Chocola. “In conjunction with pre-existing laws, these new statutes will give local law enforcement more tools to enforce these heinous criminal acts against children, and will provide additional public information about sex-offenders to the public.”

Recent abductions in Idaho and Florida make it clear this is a nationwide problem that merits a nationwide response. Nearly 100,000 sex offenders remain unregistered, and are moving freely about the country; the risk that they may strike again grows every day. In fact, the most recent, high-profile abduction crimes were all committed by previously-convicted sex offenders. The fact that these men went unwatched as they committed their outrageous acts of violence is unacceptable.

The “Children’s Safety Act’s” provisions are aimed squarely at preventing crimes against children through a coordinated law enforcement approach that includes a broadening of the definition of such crimes, increased reporting requirement for known offenders, and increases in penalties for those convicted of sexual and violent crimes against minors.

Since January 1, 2003, Zachary’s Law has been on the books in Indiana, requiring sheriff departments across the state to work together to establish a sex and violent offender registry. The law is named after Zachary Snider of Cloverdale, Indiana, who was just 10 years old when he was murdered by a convicted child molester in 1993. Currently, the Indiana Sheriffs and the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute maintain sex and violent offender registries, both of which are publicly accessible on the Internet.

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The "Children's Safety Act" the House passed today will enhance Indiana's existing registries by adding juvenile sex offenses and possession of child pornography to the list of crimes included in the database. The bill also calls for a National Sex Offender Registry, which will be maintained by the states' attorneys general and include the following information: details of the sex offender's conviction, vehicles owned or used by the sex offender, a picture of the criminal, and other current information needed by community members to assess the risk of the sex offender living in a community. With the exception of a vehicle history, the Indiana Sheriffs' registry already includes all of the information required by the bill.

"Hoosier parents deserve to have confidence in law enforcement's ability to ensure that their children are being raised in the safest possible environment," said Chocola. "Sending your children to play in the local park or to ride their bike to a friend's house should not give parents pause. With passage of this plan, we all can have greater peace of mind, knowing that our children are better protected wherever they are."

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